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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000212

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: MORE ON ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCY'S VETTING OF
PROVINCIAL COUNCIL CANDIDATES' CERTIFICATES

REF: A. BAGHDAD 185
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 120

Classified By: ANTI-CORRUPTION COORDINATOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4
(B AND D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The Commission on Integrity's (COI) acting head, Judge Rahim Al-Uqaili, denied any political pressure to vet educational certificates submitted by candidates in the upcoming provincial council elections. He indicated that the COI was acting on its own and doing its part to ensure good elections. He reported that the COI had uncovered 188 forged documents out of the 7,000 examined so far. We find Judge Rahim's denial of political pressure over the vetting less than convincing, amidst claims by other COI sources of pressure from the Dawa party. END SUMMARY.

VETTING OF CANDIDATES' CERTIFICATES CONTINUES

[1](#)2. (C) Anti-Corruption Coordinator's Office (ACCO) met January 26 with the Commission on Integrity's (COI) acting head, Judge Rahim Al-Uqaili, to follow up on reports of the COI's vetting educational certificates presented by candidates in the upcoming provincial council elections (ref a). Judge Rahim indicated that the COI was continuing the vetting, had so far covered about half of the documents submitted by the 14,431 candidates nationwide, and had identified 188 forged certificates. According to Judge Rahim, most of the forged documents discovered so far were in Baghdad (71 out of 2,100 examined) and Diyala (32 out of 645 examined), with the number of bad certificates ranging from 13 to 1 in Iraq's other provinces. He said the vetting would not be complete by election day, January 31; after that date, the COI would confine itself to reviewing the certificates of winning candidates.

DENIAL OF POLITICAL PRESSURE

[1](#)3. (C) Judge Rahim denied that the COI was acting in response to allegations from political parties or others about forged certificates by rival candidates, insisting that the COI was mandated to verify the validity of documents submitted by candidates for elective office. He said the COI took seriously its duty to help ensure good elections and had acted strictly on its own in obtaining from the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) copies of candidates' certificates in order to determine their validity. Asked about his decision to go public over the vetting -- and his criticism of the IHEC for failing to do its own vetting of the certificates -- Judge Rahim responded that "the Iraqi public needed to be assured that someone was upholding the laws" regarding the electoral process. In response to query, he stated that the COI was continuing to process the regular

flow of anti-corruption cases; he had designated only a small group of COI officials to vet the certificates so as not to disrupt the COI's normal casework.

FATE OF WINNING CANDIDATES WITH BAD CERTIFICATES

¶4. (C) Judge Rahim flatly asserted that winning candidates whose certificates were determined to be forged would be barred from occupying their council seats. He stated that the COI itself, not the IHEC, was empowered to make the decision to bar winning candidates. He added that submission of forged certificates was not the only basis on which the COI could bar winning candidates, saying the latter's failure to fully meet the qualifications to seek elective office in any respect would be sufficient grounds for the COI to act.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Judge Rahim was adamant -- but less than convincing --
Q5. (C) Judge Rahim was adamant -- but less than convincing --
in denying any political pressure to vet candidates' certificates. We find more plausible the assertions of other COI sources that the COI's acting head is acting in response to complaints from Dawa party officials about ISCI party candidates allegedly submitting bad documents. For one thing, our contacts point out that Judge Rahim has a strong personal interest in being responsive to the Dawa party's concerns: while privately critical of the Dawa Party's Prime Minister, Nuri Al-Maliki, for interfering in the COI's work (ref b), Judge Rahim is dependent on Al-Maliki for his position -- and for his prospects of being upgraded from

BAGHDAD 00000212 002 OF 002

acting to permanent Commissioner of the COI. END COMMENT
CROCKER